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WORKS IN PROGRESS

ESTABLISHED IN 1990 BY THE THURSTON COUNTY RAINBOW COALITION

The (not-so-hidden) facts behind Israel's Gaza invasion

by Phan Nguyen

A crowd estimated anywhere between 1,000 and 2,000 marched through downtown Seattle on Jan. 3 to protest Israel's latest invasion of the Gaza Strip and the US government's support of the invasion. (Photo by Berd Whitlock)

On December 27, 2008, Israel initiated a military invasion of the Gaza Strip that after nine days has left over 500 Palestinians dead and over 2,000 wounded. The attack was named "Operation Cast Lead" in reference to a children's Hanukkah song.

Once the attack began, a simplified narrative emerged to explain the circumstances:

1. Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip had a ceasefire agreement.

2. Hamas irrationally and inexplicably decided to violate the cease-fire by raining rockets on civilian areas in Israel.

3. Israel then retaliated with airstrikes in order to halt stop the firing from Gaza.

This article will dissect this narrative, referring to news articles in the international press just prior to the attack in order to develop a context that reflects the actual chain of events, rather than the simplified narrative that is based on stereotypes, conjecture, misinformation, and propaganda.

The situation in Gaza prior to the ceasefire agreement

In the January 2006 Palestinian elections, the Hamas party won a majority of the seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council, upsetting the previous Fatah majority. Rather than attempt to work with the new majority party in the Palestinian government, the United States, Israel, and other western states, as well as western-friendly Arab states, sought to undermine Hamas's authority. Eventually, the United States conspired with Fatah through weapons, financing, and training to defeat Hamas militarily. The plan backfired and Hamas defeated Fatah, taking over control of the Gaza Strip in June 2007.

Israel then attempted to undermine Hamas' authority by tightening its already existing restrictions on the flow of goods into the Gaza Strip, while denying all exports out of the Gaza Strip.

Additionally, several times since then, Israel has instituted a complete closure of the Gaza Strip, preventing Gazan access to food, fuel, and humanitarian supplies. These full closures are ostensibly meant to prevent rocket attacks on Israel from Gaza by Palestinian militant groups. However, because these closures collectively punish the entire population of 1.5 million Gazans by depriving them of food, electricity, clean water, and medical care and have done little to halt rocket attacks, these measures can more accurately be seen as strangling Gaza in order to prevent Hamas from becoming a functional governing authority. Even when Israel's full blockade is lifted, the movement of goods are kept to a bare minimum.

Origins of the ceasefire

The most recent ceasefire between Israel and Hamas was initiated on June 19, 2008. Under the agreement, which applied only to the Gaza Strip and not to the West Bank, Hamas would halt rocket and mortar attacks. Israel would cease attacks on Gaza and ease its blockade of Gaza. Additionally, since other armed groups in Palestine were firing rockets and mortar shells from Gaza, it was Hamas' responsibility to rein them in.

Initially there were minor violations on both sides that neither party interpreted as extreme. Israel continued to shoot into Gaza. Meanwhile various other militant groups within Gaza, such as Al-Quds Brigades (belonging to Islamic Jihad) and Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, challenged Hamas' authority by continuing to fire rockets and mortars. However, Hamas was able to clamp down through preventative measures and arrests until rocket firing was nonexistent.

Looking at the chart on page 4, one can clearly see that the ceasefire was initially effective in preventing rocket attacks from Gaza. Although groups other than Hamas still attempted to fire rockets and mortar shells, those numbers drastically decreased from the hundreds to single digits, until by October, the number was reduced to one rocket fired and one mortar fired. Throughout this period, no rocket or mortar caused any deaths. At the same time, Israel responded to each rocket or mortar attack by tightening the Gaza siege, thus preventing the delivery of much-needed supplies to an already deprived population of 1.5 million people.

Who broke the ceasefire?

Since the start of Operation Cast Lead, many reports have blamed Hamas for breaking the ceasefire in late December, either by stating that Hamas began firing rockets at the end of the six-month truce, or else omitting mention of the ceasefire expiration and simply stating that Hamas decided to start firing rockets suddenly. However, neither assertion adequately explains what really happened.

On Nov. 4, with no rockets fired since the single one fired by Al-Quds Brigade on Oct. 21, Israeli troops entered the Gaza Strip to destroy a tunnel that it claimed was to be used for capturing Israeli soldiers. Israeli soldiers occupied at least two Palestinian homes. Hamas fighters arrived, and a gun battle ensued. Eventually seven Hamas members were killed, some Palestinian homes were demolished, and a number of Palestinians from a single family were abducted, including some women.

It was at this point that Palestinians considered the ceasefire broken.

Hamas responded by firing over a hundred rockets and mortar shells in the direction of both Israeli military sites and civilian towns. Other Palestinian militant groups fired projectiles as well. Israel instituted a full border closure.

On Nov. 6, the military wing of Hamas issued a press release, stating that it would not renew the ceasefire after the six-month expiration, unless Israel agreed to "opening [border] crossings and lifting the siege" of Gaza.

A few minor gunfights erupted within the next few days, and a small number of rockets were fired.

By Nov. 11, the violence subsided, and no rockets were fired on that day. However, the next day, Israeli troops crossed the border into Gaza and killed four Hamas fighters, who were allegedly planting explosives near the border.

Various militant groups, including the armed wing of Hamas, responded with rockets and mortar shelling directed at both Israeli military and civilian locations.

▸ **GAZA** continues on page 4

RESPECT MY SON!

How a father is challenging the unfair treatment of special education students in our public schools

by Jeff Berryhill

Colton Daline is a student with special needs who has attended a number of schools in the Puyallup School District. Like many students with such conditions, Colton's school experience has been marked by numerous hardships. These include harassment from other students, a generic curriculum, inadequate time with specialists, and the failure on the part of the school to provide appropriate services and learning devices to enhance educational experience. In addition, the school has repeatedly failed to satisfy the wishes of his parents for developing his academic tools and kept a number of disturbing issues away from their awareness. This has included Colton's participation in a compulsory janitorial labor program, required of many students with special needs.

The following are excerpts from an interview I conducted with Colton's father, Bernie. He has been a tireless advocate on behalf of his son and other students with special needs. Bernie and the entire family have been met with stiff resistance by the Puyallup School District in their struggle to improve the situation for their son. Nevertheless, they are determined to continue their battle in the hopes that children with special needs will begin to be treated fairly and no family will have to endure the torment they have experienced thus far.

Let's begin with a brief discussion about your son Colton. What are his areas of interests or hobbies?

He likes anything with art, working on the computer, really anything he can build. He likes to be creative, to invent things. As a child he always had the ability to fix broken toys, making new toys out of broken toys rather than throwing them away. He is a heck of an artist, loves to draw. He likes to develop animation scenes, putting them together like story lines. He loves astronomy, anything about space and animals. Colton just loves science.

Were there adequate attempts made by the school to cultivate these talents?

No, none whatsoever. The school led us to believe that he was placed in an appropriate environment for his disability. However, they placed him in what is called a general developmentally delayed (DD) classroom. In these classrooms students are taught

▸ **RESPECT** continues on page 8

WORKS IN PROGRESS

Works In Progress is a free, volunteer-operated progressive community newspaper based in Olympia, Washington. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of *Works In Progress* and are solely those of the authors.

Submissions
Please send text as Word attachments. Artwork and photos can be sent electronically or we can scan them for you as camera-ready/black & white.

WIP reserves the right to publish in whole or part all submissions. For editing purposes, please enclose your phone number.

Articles may be reprinted. Please cite source.

If you don't see your issue being covered in Works In Progress, *it's because you aren't writing about it! (Or aren't finding someone else to cover it!)*

Send submissions to *olywip@gmail.com*. Send event announcements to *wipannouncements@gmail.com*.

Or mail to Works In Progress, PO Box 295, Olympia, WA 98507-0295.

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> WIP *will make every effort to work with the contributor of material considered by* WIP *to be offensive in order to reach a mutually agreed upon resolution, but* WIP *reserves the right as a last resort to edit or not print submitted material.*

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We will collectively endeavor to be sensitive and respectful to all those oppressed in this society, and their issues. However, if and when we should make a mistake in this regard, we expect to acknowledge it and to express regret for injury or insult given.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS/EVENTS

Emergency donations needed for Thurston County homeless

Please donate to Bread and Roses Homeless Advocacy Services which is open and accepting donations Monday through Friday at 1320 8th Ave E. in Olympia.

If you are able to donate this holiday season please consider the homeless community at Bread and Roses. The ice and snow has hit the homeless community hard this winter. There are not enough shelters for everyone. Some people are unable to access shelters because they lack "valid identification". ...Small barriers, such as lack of I.D., prevent people from getting into housing and shelters leaving many people on the street, with out any warm, dry or safe place to be.

Simple things like bus passes, new socks, hand warmers, gloves, rain jackets, tents, flashlights, sleeping bags, tents and tarps go a long way. Money donations are also accepted; all donations go directly to homeless services and are tax-deductable. Love is an Action. ACT.

Please call 360-754-4588 or 360-754-4085 if you have questions about donations or to make sure we are open.

Kick off Photo Voices project with POWER

Monday, January 5, Potluck at 5:30, First United Methodist Church, 1224 Legion Way SE in Olympia. Onsite childcare from 6-8, and POWER can help with transportation costs if needed.

Photo Voices, a project of Parents Organizing for Welfare and Economic Rights (POWER) provides cameras to low-income members of our community who then take photographs that help identify and improve their communities. The photographs represent what is happening in the participants' lives and serve as a point for discussion about what can be done to change the present situation in regards to welfare, poverty, housing, caregiving, education and related issues. These photographs and their accompanying stories give a face and voice to our community members living in poverty, can dispel myths and stigmas about who is poor and why and empowers those behind the camera.

For more info contact POWER at: 701 Franklin Street SE, Olympia, WA 98501, 360-352-9716 toll free 866-343-9716, *welfarerights@riseup.net*, *www.oly-wa.us/power*, *www.myspace.com/parentsorganizing*

Picket to support Olympia Local of the American Postal Workers Union

Monday, January 12, 11 am–1 pm, Olympia Downtown Post Office, 900 Jefferson Street

This informational picket is to call for the Postal Service to bring fired Union President Clint Burelson back to work and to bring the outgoing mail operations back to Olympia. The community is invited to join APWU in our efforts.

Olympia Climate Action at "Mondays at MIXX"

featuring Joe McHugh, local author and storyteller, Monday, January 12, 7 pm, MIXX 96 at State and Washington, Olympia

McHugh will share his experience of *Living off the Grid: five years without electricity on a West Virginia farm*. McHugh will also discuss his current novel, *Kilowatt*, which Jim Hightower calls, "an inspiring and entertaining tale about how ordinary working people can stand up to powerful corporate interests" in this case the electrical energy industry.

For more information, please contact Barb Scavezze 878-0991.

Sixth annual Middle East Film Festival: "Roots and Realities of Occupation"

Wednesday, January 21–January 30 at The Evergreen State College, Olympia

Guest filmmakers include Parva Sharma (*A Jihad for Love*), Jackie Salloum, (*Slingshot Hip Hop*), Raoud (*Santa Claus in Baghdad*).

For more info email sesame@evergreen.edu or call 360-867-6724 visit *www.evergreen.edu/sesame*

See program information on pages 6–7.

Oaxaca: Non-violent revolution in the 21st century

Film screening, music, and discussion

Thursday, January 29, 6:30 pm, Traditions Café and World Folk Art, 300 5th Ave SW, Olympia

The documentary film *From the Edge of the Blade*, about the popular uprising in Oaxaca, Mexico, will be screened with live music. After the screening, Jose Orozco, will speak about the current situation in Oaxaca, followed by a general discussion about what lessons we can learn from the Oaxacan social movement. Filmmaker and activist Jill Friedberg (*This is what Democracy Looks Like*, *Grain of Sand*, *A Little Bit of So Much Truth*), community activist Rochelle Gause, as well as Johan Genberg, director of *From the Edge of the Blade*, will participate in the discussion.

There will be a suggested donation of $8 at the door, but no one will be turned away for lack of money. All donations goes to the Oaxacan video collective Mal de Ojo TV, one of the few independent media outlets in Oaxaca.

For more info, contact Johan Genberg and Rochelle Gause of Trickle Up Films, *johan.genberg@gmail.com*, *www.trickleupfilms.org*, (360) 866-8644.

Potluck to create a Housing and Community Space Use Collective in Olympia

Friday, January 30, 7pm–9pm, Traditions Café and World Folk Art, 300 5th Avenue SW, Olympia

We welcome all individuals, organizations and progressive businesses to participate in these conversations. We are grateful for inspirational and financial help that we receive from all individuals and organizations. However, in order to maintain our independence as an educational center we are not accepting shared space applications from government groups, religious groups or multinational corporations.

If you are interested please send us an email by visiting the Peace Community's website at www.PeaceCommunities.org and click on 'Housing and Community Space Use Collective.' Thank you. You can also call us from 11am-11pm, 7 days a week at (360) 539-8008 and we would love to talk with you.

Annual membership meeting, potluck, & contra dance

Friday, January 30, 6 pm, South Bay Grange Hall, 3918 Sleater-Kinney Road NE, Olympia

The evening is free and open to all—current members, prospective members, and everyone else interested in saving our local farms for the future. Find out what we're doing to promote healthy local food and farming systems in the South Sound—and how you can help. Share a delicious meal with your friends and neighbors, kick up some dust on the dance floor, and play your luck in our fabulous farm basket raffle. Co-sponsored by the South Bay Grange.

Contact our Membership Coordinator, Caitlin Krenn, at (360) 402-0302 for details.

People's summit and march on the Capitol

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Monday, January 19, 9 am Summit, 11:30 am March, St. John's Episcopal Church 114 20th Ave SE, Olympia

Join us as we urge our lawmakers to fight for: Affordable Housing, Health Care for All, Income Support, Responsible Lending. The People's Summit is a chance to transform the hope of election season into progressive action. Join us in Olympia to call on state lawmakers to invest in our communities, especially in this climate of economic uncertainty. Statewide Poverty Action Network builds grassroots power to end causes of poverty and to create opportunities for everyone to prosper. We organize people with low incomes across the state to vote, to testify at public hearings and to become engaged in the legislative process, especially on issues that directly impact them. Our work includes a variety of campaigns from promoting a Working Families Tax Rebate to fighting against predatory mortgage and payday lending. For more information visit *www.povertyaction.org* or contact Greer at (206) 694-6794 or *greer@povertyaction.org*.

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Resistance is possible

by Peter Bohmer

I think there is a good possibility that we are about to enter a period of major uprisings, social movements and major protests focusing on but not limited to the global recession/depression we are entering into. I am talking both about the United States and globally, although my comments focus primarily on the U.S..

One sign of this bubbling unrest is the massive national support for the occupation of the Republic Windows and Doors factory in Chicago by their workers when the owners shut down the plant and laid off the workers there on Dec. 5. It seems that the majority of workers were Latino/a immigrants, pointing out the key role of immigrants in a more militant labor movement, and the continuing importance of the strongest movement in the US, the immigrant rights movement, in the current period.

This sit-in at Republic Windows and Doors by its workers really resonated with people throughout the US, even those who in normal times talk about respecting private property and the law. The workers at Republic Windows and Doors have inspired me and given me hope of the beginning of a massive fight-back against a failing and unjust economy. I think there is large-scale understanding and anger that the economic system is broken, and that those most responsible for the current situation are those with political and economic power.

In Europe, the riots, militant protests and strikes in Greece in early and mid December against the police killing of a youth and growing economic hardship there is another sign of renewed activism, as is the support for this Greek resistance in many other countries in Europe. Just like the occupation of Republic Windows and Doors, the uprising in Greece is tapping into broader conscious and unconscious feelings of anger at the economic breakdown and repression.

In the US, the Obama campaign has reawakened interest in politics, in yearnings for economic and social justice, and for peace and against war by millions of people, particularly youth. Combined with a rapidly spiraling downward economy that is already causing a lot of hardship that will sadly worsen in 2009, and the ineffective and in many ways criminal bailout to financial institutions, there is a lot of anger and dissatisfaction among the people of the United States. There is strong interest and desire in understanding what is going on and what should be done.

Obama's pro corporate, pro capitalist globalization and neoliberal economic advisers are likely to underestimate how serious the economic problems are and misdiagnose the problem and the necessary policy changes. Poverty, in the next two years, will grow substantially as well as people losing their homes and jobs.

The new foreign policy and military team are likely to carry out a foreign and military policy similar to Bill Clinton's administration. The continued militarism will possibly awaken anti-war activities, particularly the huge and continued war and military spending during an economic depression when human needs are so great. Even with regards to the environment and climate change, the Obama administration reforms are likely to be wholly inadequate. Progressive economic and foreign policy will not come from the Obama administration unless there are huge and organized social movements demanding this.

> Progressive economic and foreign policy will not come from the Obama administration unless there are huge and organized social movements demanding this.

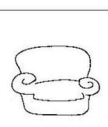
So I think we need to be preparing for these possibilities of increased interest in activism and a spreading and growth of organized and unorganized uprisings. Let us think big! We need to strengthen the infrastructure of existing movements, connect issues and organizations better, be bolder in our explanations of what is going on and in our demands. Capitalism is not working. It is particularly important that we build and strengthen institutions locally, regionally, nationally and even globally that can provide explanations of the economic and financial collapse, teach potential activists useful skills, and be a place for the discussion of causes, impact, and strategies for reformist and revolutionary change.

Perhaps most importantly we need to talk and listen and connect more with those who are losing their jobs, their homes, their health care, cannot afford higher education and who are falling into poverty and near poverty.

In the Pacific Northwest, a few of us have begun talking about doing a major teach-in and strategy conference in spring 2009 explaining what is going on economically and building on current organizing and resistance. The response so far in a few informal conversations has been very enthusiastic.

Recession/depression does not necessarily mean more organized resistance and radicalization but I have a feeling that there are more possibilities today for massive resistance and mass movements than there has been in a long time.

Peter Bohmer is a community organizer and economics professor at The Evergreen State College.



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LETTER TO THE EDITOR FROM MATTHEW GREEN

Great articles about the Olympia City Council and the isthmus! Especially good was Sandy Mayes' discussion of how *The Olympian* and some councilmembers try to conflate certain political disagreement with hate speech and violence, to shut down legitimate debate that displeases them. I can add another example.

In its editorial about the violence directed at Jeff Kingsbury, *The Olympian* quoted Rhenda Strub as saying that council members have faced "constant abuse and bullying." This implies that such violence is common.

I asked Rhenda, via email, exactly what she meant. (These emails were on Rhenda's city account, and I told her in advance that I might publicize them.) Her answer was, in part:

I'm referring mostly to conversations with people who did not give me permission to share their words with others. So I won't elaborate on content or commenters [sic].

There have also been numerous mean spirited blog postings and some unpleasant cartoons in the Sitting Duck. But, most of it comes in the form of personal communication.

When I ran for this office I really thought I could be a bridge between two different political camps: the people who are more business oriented and those who are more social service oriented. I think I am both. But, I'm finding that rather than being embraced by each side for the issues we agree on I am attacked by each side for not "towing [sic] *the line" with them.*

...I shouldn't have to put up with [a rezone opponent] screaming "liar, you're a liar" at me when I'm speaking in Council. But, that has been the least of the abusive behavior. The rest has been ugly, personal, and painful.

In other words, Rhenda perceives all political dissent as bullying and abuse -- because it is painful to Rhenda. If you don't "embrace" her, you are "attacking" her. The substantive concerns of the dissenters don't seem to register.

But, no matter how strongly worded and no matter how emotionally expressed, personal conversations, blog postings, political cartoons, and even angry complaints are *not* equivalent to vandalism and anonymous homophobic hate mail. Equating them is wrong and harmful to democracy.

My response to Rhenda was, in part:

The people criticizing you care about Olympia, they disagree with your choices as a councilmember, and they are letting you know. They are upset, because they believe you are hurting this community. And so, that negative emotion comes through in their communications.

That's good. It should come through. And you, as an elected official, should hear it. This is not "abuse and bullying" (unless they threaten you, other than politically), certainly not violence, and it should not be discounted as if it were.

Admittedly, some criticism crosses the line into insults, which are inappropriate and unproductive. However, even that is not comparable to violence.

...[Also,] have you asked yourself why—assuming she is rational and intelligent—[the rezone opponent] would consider you to be lying? I'm serious. Maybe she doesn't have the same information you have. Maybe she sees the issue from a completely different perspective, from which your statement would be false. Maybe you were, in fact, fudging just a bit to make your argument seem stronger. I wasn't there and I don't know. But in every case, there is a better response than calling her abusive and discounting her concerns.

...I encourage you to think past what you consider uncivil, and explore why someone feels strongly enough to say something. Welcome all communications from constituents, even when it is unpleasant to hear. Try to learn from it. You may not agree with it, but you will become a better public servant.

Rhenda has not said whether she accepts my advice. I offer it sincerely.

PS: In a different article, Gerald Reilly noted that he would not have voted for Doug Mah, Rhenda Strub, and Craig Ottavelli if he had known they would support the isthmus rezone. Well, specifically, the rezone wasn't proposed yet and, generally, candidates will never, of course, announce that they intend to favor developers over large numbers of citizens.

But there is still a way for voters to figure it out: watch the money. The best predictor of a candidate's future votes on development and land use issues is how much campaign money they got from developers, builders, and realtors. (Can you guess who were the biggest financial supporters of Doug, Rhenda, and Craig?)

Matthew Green was an Olympia City Councilmember from 2002 to 2006.

More communication with the City Council

by John Van Eenwyk

A psychological analysis of why vandalism is occurring in Olympia, as presented to the Olympia City Council.

My name is John Van Eenwyk. I'm a clinical psychologist and psychoanalyst here in Olympia. I am a priest at St. Benedict's Episcopal church in Lacey and have been a priest at St. John's Episcopal church just up the street. I am also the clinical director and founder of the International Trauma Treatment Program here in Olympia, which has received a proclamation from the City Council contributing its support to our work. I have never sat through a whole council meeting, so that's why I stayed. I didn't realize we would be able to talk at the end of the meeting, so here goes.

What I have to say will not be pleasant as it is a psychological analysis of why we're getting vandalism and hate crimes in this town. First of all, as a priest and as a psychologist, I do have my finger somewhat on the pulse of the community, and secondly, as someone who travels to war zones around the world, I have some knowledge about why people rise up and rebel against authority. So here's what I have to say.

The image of the city council among much of the public today is decreasingly good—in fact, it's very bad. The public is beginning to express concerns about the council for three reasons. One: Scornfulness toward the public. Calling members of the public "idiots" is something that is not going down well with the public. Two: Arrogance. Arrogance basically refers to the hearings that you held on raising height limits on the isthmus. These hearings were considered to be a sham. The public believes that you had made up your minds beforehand. Now, remember that I'm giving you people's perceptions. You may feel that the facts are different. Three, and probably the most damaging, is corruption. The word on the street is that you have received campaign contributions from Tri Vo, and that Capital Playhouse has received contributions from Tri Vo. This obviously fosters an appearance of corruption.

Now, when people feel they've been disenfranchised, when they feel that there has not been enough effort made to generate consensus, they become anarchistic. They take matters into their own hands. And they will respond with as much force as they feel is coming from the council. So as the council is acting toward them, so they will feel justified in acting toward the council. I fear that your vote tonight to raise the limits, with so little attempt to reach consensus with the public, is basically a statement that the public will hear as "let the battle begin." I think this battle may not be good for the council, and it will not be good for the public, but it is, unfortunately, a psychological reality. This is how people do respond. If you do not like the response, then you must change your attitude toward the public.

I would have liked to have presented this before your vote, but I didn't have an opportunity. Sorry to be the bearer of bad news, but better that you know the lay of the land rather than going into it not knowing what you're facing.

Another scene from the Jan. 3 protest in Seattle. (Image stitched from consecutive photos by Berd Whitlock)

▸ **GAZA** continued from page 4

The Hamas military wing issued a press statement: "Retaliation options are open, and the ceasefire will not prevent us from retaliating to any Israeli folly."

Hamas was no longer preventing other armed groups from firing projectiles. Rockets and mortars were being fired from the Gaza Strip in response to Israeli attacks in Gaza, and in response to Israeli attacks and assassinations in the West Bank. As usual, multiple armed groups would claim credit for the same rocket attacks.

From then on, rockets and mortars were being fired almost every day, although at a considerably lower rate than in the months preceding the ceasefire, and causing no fatalities. (Prior to the ceasefire, rocket and mortar attacks from Gaza had killed a total of 16 people in Israel since 2001. Due to the inaccuracy of the weapons, only 0.2% of all the rockets and mortar shells fired into Israel from Gaza have resulted in a fatality) Israel also regularly struck at military targets in the Gaza Strip, killing a number of Palestinians.

Thus, since Israeli troops crossed into Gaza on Nov. 4, the ceasefire had been on shaky ground, and it could be construed as more of a low-level tit-for-tat, rather than any true cessation. Before that, there were no attacks from either side, although Israel's blockade of Gaza was continuing to strangle the population.

What does Hamas want?

By the time the ceasefire expired, there really was no state of calm to maintain. But what did Hamas hope to attain by escalating its own rocket attacks and allowing other armed groups to fire rockets as well?

According to the public statements of Israeli officials, it's a mystery. Israeli President Shimon Peres stated, "Nobody in this world understands what are Hamas' goals and why it continues to fire missiles....This shooting has no point, no logic, and no chance."

Mark Regev, the spokesperson for Prime Minister Ehud Olmert also publicly expressed befuddlement: "There's really no logical explanation why Hamas acted the way they did, why they attacked, why they escalated, except maybe...is it not possible there's something inherently nihilistic in Hamas's agenda?"

Meanwhile mainstream press has posited a similarly simplistic view. *New York Times* reporter Stephen Farrell, in a Dec. 29 piece headlined, "Hamas Credo Led It to End Cease-Fire," claims that Hamas hungers for publicity and "status conveyed on Hamas as the Palestinians' principal resistance."

Robert Dreyfuss on the *Nation* online followed up with a similarly simplistic explanation: "Like Israeli extremists such as Netanyahu, who thrive on conflict, Hamas too seems to have believed that it could revive itself by provoking its giant military adversary." Such statements sound dramatic, but have little bearing in reality.

The fact is that Hamas was being caged in from several directions. Within the Gaza Strip, it was being strangled and its authority challenged by the closure imposed by Israel, whose intention was to make it impossible for Hamas to administer to the needs of its people. Since November 4, the ceasefire was no longer working as planned, having deteriorated into the low-level tit-for-tat attacks and no significant easing of the blockade. In the West Bank, the Fatah-run Palestinian Authority working under the guidance of Israel and the United States—was clamping down on Hamas, arresting its members. Internationally, world governments, also under US–Israeli influence, were refusing to accept Hamas's legitimacy or acknowledge Hamas's position as a ruling power.

Hamas' foray into governmental rule had been undermined from the start. By December 2008, with the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip worsening and with the ceasefire no longer a true ceasefire, Hamas needed to take action. It basically had two weapons from which to negotiate: It had the power to prevent other militant groups in the Gaza Strip from attacking Israel, and it had the power to attack Israel itself, primarily by launching rockets and mortar shells.

Hamas needed to show that it still had some cards it could play. Its goal was to slightly intensify the situation by showing that it still held some power, in order to get Israel to renegotiate a new ceasefire on better terms.

This analysis of Hamas' position and intentions is neither obscure nor novel. In fact, it was the generally accepted assessment, notwithstanding the feigned befuddlement of Israeli spokespersons. We can look at the record:

Wall Street Journal, Dec. 29: "In recent weeks, Israeli intelligence officials have said they believed Hamas doesn't want a full-scale confrontation, but rather wants to make a show of force before seeking a renewed cease-fire on more favorable terms."

And what would those favorable terms be?

Jerusalem Post, Dec. 17: "[Israeli defense] officials predicted that Hamas would eventually agree to an extension of the truce but was 'posturing itself' in an attempt to gain a commitment from Israel and Egypt to reopen the crossings into Gaza."

Ha'aretz, Dec. 22: [Shin Bet security service chief Yuval Diskin at an Israeli cabinet meeting on Dec. 21:] "Make no mistake, Hamas is interested in continuing the truce, but wants to improve its terms. It wants us to lift the siege [of Gaza], stop [IDF] attacks, and extend the truce to include [the West Bank]."

Ha'aretz, Dec. 22: [Shmuel Zakai, former commander of the IDF's Gaza Division:] "We could have eased the siege over the Gaza Strip, in such a way that the Palestinians, Hamas, would understand that holding their fire served their interests. But when you create a tahadiyeh [referring to the ceasefire], and the economic pressure on the Strip continues, it's obvious that Hamas will try to reach an improved tahadiyeh, and that their way to achieve this, is resumed Qassam [rocket] fire.

Ha'aretz, Dec. 28: "Hamas has clear conditions for its extension [of the ceasefire]: The opening of the border crossings for goods and cessation of IDF attacks in Gaza, as outlined in the original agreement. Later, Hamas wants the cease-fire to be extended to the West Bank."

And what did Hamas say?

Al-Ahram, Dec. 25-31: "[Quoting Ayman Taha, high-ranking Hamas official:] 'What kind of truce agreement [is Israel] about when Israel refuses to implement any of the points agreed about lifting the blockade?... We will not allow Israel a ceasefire that it can exploit in order to attack us militarily and tighten the stranglehold on us economically.' Hamas, says Taha, will agree to a renewal of the truce only if Israel halts all aggressive activities, lifts all forms of the boycott that it has imposed on a million and a half people in Gaza for more than two years, and applies the truce to the occupied West Bank. In addition, he added, the truce will have to be backed by international guarantees since his movement can no longer 'trust agreements made by Israel."

Ha'aretz, Dec. 24: "Mahmoud Zahar, one of the Hamas leaders in Gaza, told Israel's Channel 10 on Monday that the truce could be restored if Israel provides Gazans with regular food supplies and electricity and puts military actions to a halt in the West Bank and Gaza. Zahar also told Egyptian newspaper *Al Ahram* in an interview published Tuesday that Israel need only agree to the conditions of the last truce, reached in June, for it to be renewed for another six months."

Was that asking too much from a ceasefire? Amnesty International didn't think so. Here's what Amnesty stated on Nov. 5, after Israel violated the ceasefire: "The ceasefire has brought enormous improvements in the quality of life in Sderot and other Israeli villages near Gaza, where before the ceasefire residents lived in fear of the next Palestinian rocket strike. However, nearby in the Gaza Strip the Israeli blockade remains in place and the population has so far seen few dividends from the ceasefire."

As noted in *Ha'aretz* on Dec. 24, "Hamas warnings are looking more and more like a new version of the most popular game in the region: brinkmanship." And on Jan. 2, "Hamas has already demonstrated rational behavior by alternating its strategies, between restraint and brinkmanship." Hamas' recent actions make more sense when judged by the more conventional idea of brinkmanship, rather than dismissed as religious extremist irrationality.

Another indicator that Hamas was seeking brinkmanship is that Hamas attempted to up the ante but decided not to go all the way. Rocket attacks and mortar shelling increased by late December, but most of these attacks were committed by groups other than Hamas' armed wing. Hamas chose to participate in the tit-for-tat attacks, but with some restraint—by not preventing other groups from firing rockets and mortars, while not participating in the attacks as much.

Additionally, the idea that Hamas was seeking a showdown with Israeli ground forces has little weight, notwithstanding Hamas' penchant for blustery pronouncements. Although Hamas has been able to upgrade its fighting capabilities to some extent during the ceasefire, so far there have been no signs that Hamas has attained the type of military capabilities needed to hold off Israeli ground forces comparable to Hezbollah's capabilities in 2006. As well, the Israeli military has acknowledged, with reservations, that it has overestimated Hamas' capabilities to sustain rocket attacks against Israel.

What does Israel want?

Most media have treated Israel's actions as a direct response to Palestinian rocket and mortar fire from the Gaza Strip, although some have characterized it as a disproportionate response. The reality is that Israel's invasion of the Gaza Strip is not a direct response to Palestinian firing and is thus neither proportionate nor disproportionate to such a goal.

If Israel was indeed responding to Palestinian rocket and mortar fire, then it would presumably focus its retaliatory attacks on the perpetrators. Several other armed groups in Gaza have been responsible for the rocket and mortar fire, including the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and the armed wings of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), and the Popular Resistance Committees (PRC). One of the groups most responsible for attacks on Israel during the ceasefire period and immediately afterward is the Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

Yet the primary target of Operation Cast Lead is what can be considered the Hamas infrastructure. The public statements from Israeli officials have almost exclusively focused on Hamas. And this is not limited to the armed wing of Hams. As one senior Israeli military official explained, "There are many aspects of Hamas, and we are trying to hit the whole spectrum, because everything is connected and everything supports terrorism against Israel." To that end, Israel has intentionally bombed civilian targets such as Gaza's parliament building, the education and transportation ministries, mosques, a university, and money exchange stores. Israel has also intentionally targeted the civil police force, which is responsible for keeping local order. In one instance, Israel bombed a graduation ceremony for police cadets, killing over 40 civilians. The sole connection to "terrorism" is that the civil police force operates under the government, which is run by Hamas.

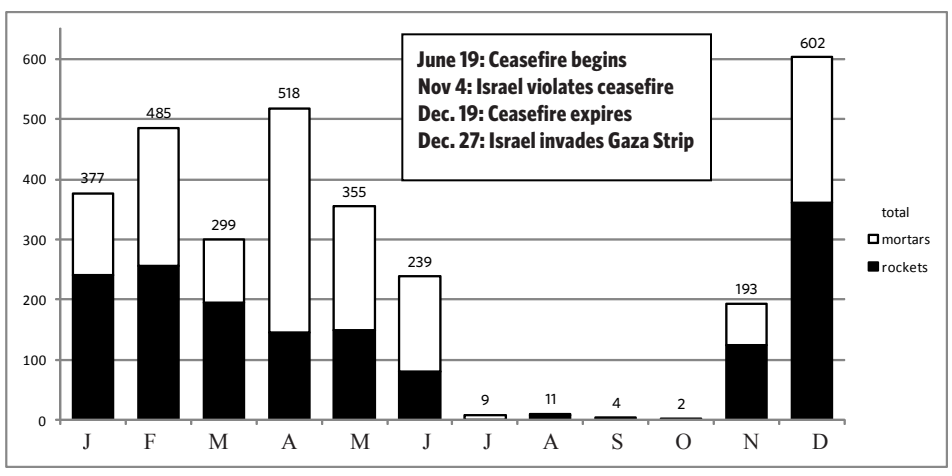
Ironically, it was Hamas that prevented other militant groups from firing rockets and mortar shells into Israel during the ceasefire. As the ruling authority in Gaza, it was able to clamp down on these other groups. After Israel's violation of the ceasefire on Nov. 4, Hamas eased its restrictions, and several groups started firing rockets and mortar shells again.

By destroying the civil infrastructure, Israel is making it more difficult for Hamas to enforce a ceasefire on other armed groups. The reality is that the period in which the people of southern Israel enjoyed the most calm was during the ceasefire.

At this point however, Israel has indicated no interest in a ceasefire, preferring instead to pursue its true goal: to destroy Hamas' authority over the Gaza Strip, a goal that it had previously attempted by pitting Fatah against Hamas, and also by strangling the population of the Gaza Strip by imposing a blockade.

A greatly expanded version of this article will appear on the Works in Progress *website at* www.olywip.org.

Number of rockets and mortars fired from Gaza, 2008



Obama: There is only one president at a time... but go Israel!

In case you're wondering what President-Elect Barack Obama's doing about the Gaza Strip, he's got his hands full with another occupied strip of land—Hawai'i! Obama officially has no comment on Israel's aerial attacks and the 400 dead Palestinians. But on NBC's *Meet the Press* on Dec. 28, Obama's senior advisor David Axelrod spoke on his behalf to say, "There's only one president at a time, and President Bush speaks for the United States of America until January 20th."

Too late! Israel is already quoting Obama to justify its assault on Gaza. Numerous Israeli spokespersons such as Benjamin Netanyahu and Ambassador Sallai Meridor have been referencing Obama's visit to Sderot during his US presidential campaign (and why was Obama campaigning for the US Presidency in Sderot, Israel?), where Obama said, "If somebody was sending rockets into my house where my two daughters sleep at night, I'm going to do everything in my power to stop that. And I would expect Israelis to do the same thing."

On *Meet the Press*, David Axelrod confirmed Obama's sentiment. However, if, as both Axelrod and Obama like to remind us, "There's only one president at a time, and President Bush speaks for the United States of America," then there's only one Obama at a time, and right now he's speaking for Israel, whether he means to.

And if Obama expects Israel to "do everything in [its] power to stop" rocket attacks, does that "everything" include strangling 1.5 million people and bombing their civil infrastructure...and still getting rocket attacks?

No, Obama doesn't live in Sderot. He'll be living in the White House, and from there, he really does have "everything in [his] power to stop" the Palestine–Israel conflict. He can withhold funding to Israel. He can uphold the Arms Export Contol and Foreign Assistance Acts that prohibits sales of weapons to commit war crimes. He can revoke the immunity that the US grants Israel at the UN. He can end the great presidential tradition of being Israel's enabler. Yes, he can.

President-elect Obama wondering what he would do if he was vacationing in the Gaza Strip and not in Kailua, Hawai'i.

Testimony of Ahmad Sanur, metal-workshop owner

from B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories

I have a metal workshop on Salah a-Din Street, near Zamu Square, nor far from the Palestinian Red Crescent.

On Monday [Dec. 29] my daughter Hibah, who is 22, told me that she heard on the radio that a metal workshop had been bombed in the area of my shop. I immediately called my sons to go with me and see what happened to the workshop, which is my only source of income. Relatives and neighborhoods joined us, and we all went there in our Mercedes truck. My son 'Alaa drove.

I was shocked what I saw when we got to the shop. Three meters from the shop there is a house that belongs to 'Abd al-Ghani Hamdan. The house was completely demolished. Only a crater about ten meters deep was left on the site. The walls collapsed onto the metal shop, damaging part of it. I was afraid people would steal equipment, so I decided to remove some of the things in the shop.

The young guys among us began to remove things from the workshop: tools, welding rods, gas canisters for cooking, and all kinds of things. When the truck was full, my son 'Imad took the things home, unloaded them, and came back with the truck to take more things. They began to load the oxygen balloons that we use at work. I remember that we had six balloons, and the young people took three of them to the truck. The place was like a beehive. All the young people I mentioned and other young people who live in the neighborhood came to help load the equipment.

I was standing on the other side of the road because it was very dusty and I suffer from shortness of breath. I watched them load the things onto the truck. 'Imad stood on the truck and arranged the things that were brought from the workshop. Among the things were two containers of benzene that I kept in stock. Suddenly, I saw a light flash next to my truck, fire broke out, and I heard a blast. I began to run toward the blast, about thirty meters away. When I managed to approach and the smoke scattered, I saw a few bodies, one of them that of my son 'Imad. I fainted, and when I awoke a few hours later, I was told that 'Imad and seven other young people who were helping us had been killed. Two members of my family—Bilal and Baha Soheil Ghabayen—were very seriously injured.

I was very surprised that the Israeli army claimed that it had bombed a truck loaded with rockets. I invite any weapons expert in the world to prove this. That is a lie. My son and I had no connection to that issue. I engage in ironworks, and nothing else, in my metal workshop. I never had any ties with a political organization and I worked my whole life as a metalworker inside Israel. Since the closures began, I have worked as a metalworker in Gaza.

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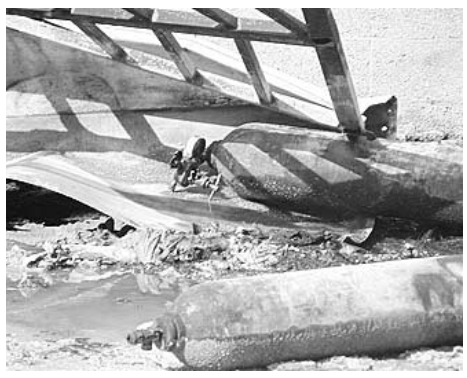

Selling Israel on YouTube

Israel is always coming up with ingenious ways to make us love it. It believes that the bad reputation it has earned in the world is a PR issue and not a moral one. Of course, the best way to improve Israel's image would be to end the occupation of Palestine, but that would be too practical. Instead, Israel has done everything else, from sponsoring a "Women of the Israel Defense Forces" bikini spread in *Maxim* magazine to hosting a popular reality TV show in which contestants compete to see who can be the ultimate spokesperson/apologist for Israel.

Perhaps figuring that "Operation Cast Lead" couldn't sell by its actions alone, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni "instructed the Foreign Ministry to take emergency measures to adapt Israel's international public relations to the ongoing escalation in the Gaza Strip." (*Ha'aretz*, Dec. 12). The latest innovation is harnessing the power of YouTube. Israel has created its own YouTube channel in which it has uploaded grainy black-and-white videos of Palestinians getting obliterated. But the squeamish shouldn't be concerned, explains the IDF's army's foreign press branch head, Maj. Avital Leibovich: "The intelligent audience watching the footage will know that people killed [in the YouTube videos] did not have peaceful intentions toward Israel....I don't believe they'll be disturbed."

> Who would have thought that uploading snuff films could improve Israel's image?

Who would have thought that uploading snuff films could improve Israel's image? But then again, during Israel's invasion of the West Bank in 2002, soldiers took over the Ramallah TV station and broadcast pornographic videos. Israel's got a right to defend itself, y'know?

One popular video that Maj. Leibovich has uploaded shows several people putting some heavy tubes onto the back of a pickup truck. The video caption explains that you're watching "Grad missiles being loaded onto the Hamas vehicle." Then, at 2:09 into the video, the entire screen goes boom! Just like a video game. Wow, I think I like Israel that much better!

Unfortunately, the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem has shown us the other side of the story. B'Tselem has interviewed the "Hamas" truck's owner, Ahmad Sanur. Sanur says that the truck was being loaded with oxygen canisters used for welding. "According to Sanur's testimony, he and members of his family were trying to salvage material from a metal workshop he owns, which was next door to a bombed house, in order to prevent looting." B'Tselem visited the site and took photos.

When asked about this by Al-Jazeera, Maj. Leivovich confidently explained: "We gathered intelligence for many, many months for this operation. [*Wait, you mean this isn't a response to Hamas 'violating the ceasefire' in late December?*]....We believe this was a legitimate target."

However, some things don't look right. The 122 mm Grad rockets that Hamas uses are about 9 feet long. The tubes shown in the video appear shorter and fatter. Also, none of the "Hamas terrorists" are armed. They're walking around transporting missiles during a military operation, and they're not concerned for their lives while loading missiles onto the back of an open pickup truck? Also, wouldn't the Grad missiles have detonated during Israel's strike and obliterated the truck that they were lying in? The truck's still there. And then there's the IDF's explanation of what the "terrorists" were doing: "According to IDF assessments, the missiles were being transferred by Hamas to a hiding location...or were on route to missile launching sites." Well, which is it? I thought you had months of intelligence. If I thought those were Grad missiles, I could have guessed as much!

Then again, the IDF hasn't always been so good at interpreting reconnaissance footage. In 2004, the IDF released video from an unmanned aerial vehicle showing a Palestinian placing a Qassam rocket into a UN ambulance for transport. Strangely, the terrorist was holding the heavy rocket in one hand and nonchalantly tossing it into the ambulance. When pushed to explain the several inconsistencies, Israel reluctantly admitted that the rocket was actually a stretcher.

The head of the UN Relief Works Agency (UNRWA), Peter Hansen, demanded an apology. Instead, the Israeli ambassador to the UN at the time, Dan Gillerman, called Hansen an "Israel hater" and demanded his resignation. Three months later, the Bush administration blocked Hansen's reappointment, and he was let go.

Fortunately the ambulance worker carrying the stretcher wasn't assassinated. The same can't be said for the family that was loading the oxygen canisters. Now, thanks to the IDF's YouTube channel, you can see the final seconds in the lives of Wisam Akram 'Eid, age 14; Ahmad Ibrahim Khila, age 15; and six other innocent Palestinians before they were torn to pieces by US-supplied weapons and your tax dollars.

Ahmad Sanur at ground zero. (Photo by B'Tselem fieldworker)

Sixth Annual Middle East Film Festival: The Evergreen State College

Wednesday, Jan 21

6:00 pm, Lecture Hall 5
PALESTINE BLUES

Co-sponsored by Mind Screen

Nida Sinnokrot / 2008 / Palestine / 72 min

The demolished house that is the site of the death of American peace activist Rachel Corrie is only the first of the troubling markers in the landscape charted by Palestine Blues as the director travels the route of the infamous security wall. A bereft farmer grieves for his ancient orchard as the bulldozers lay it to waste, but a new movement in nonviolent resistance grows in its place. Focusing on the village of Jayyous and its nonviolent campaign against the wall, the film documents the heroic victories and tragic defeats of this farming community's fight for survival.

Israeli soldier at anti-wall demonstration attempting to block the documentation of non-violent resistance.

Director Nida Sinnokrot examines the repercussions of the massive Israeli Seperation Wall as well as the Settlement expansion in the affected Palestinian faming communities throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip in this eye-opening documentary focusing on the grass roots resistance movement. By detailing how the vast majority of natural resources - including 65% of fruits and vegetables produced in the region and essen tial water supplies - fall on the Israeli side of the wall, Sinnokrot attempts to highlight the plight of the Palestinian people for the whole world to see.

7:30 pm, Lecture Hall 5
Panel on International Solidarity

Palestine solidarity activists and organizers discuss the current situation in Palestine, mainstream media misinformation, refugees and the Palestinian diaspora and organizing a boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign. Speakers who have participated in direct action, education and resistance in Palestine and US to be in attendance.

8:30 pm, Lecture Hall 5
33 DAYS

Mai Masri / 2006 / Lebanon/ 70 min

Filmed during the Israeli war on Lebanon in the summer of 2006, 33 Days chronicles the efforts of theatre director Sharif Abdunnur, graphic designer Sharif Bibi, journalist Fadia Baszzi and Mariam Al-Bassam, director of the news desk at New TV, as they try to provide emergency aid, report current news of the conflict and help Lebanese children process the violence and destruction they see around them on a daily basis. Masri's film is full of compassion and humanity even as it records the horrible devastation of war. In this gripping documentary award winning filmmaker Mai Masri puts a face on the often-desensitized horrors of war taking us beyond the icy statistics and muted news stories into the fiery reality and courageous hearts of the survivors.

Beruit 2006 could be Gaza 2009.

Thursday, Jan 22

6:00 pm, Lecture Hall 5
A JIHAD FOR LOVE

Parva Sharma / 2007 / India, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Egypt, South Africa, France and more / 80 min

Fourteen centuries after the revelation of the holy Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), Islam today is the world's second largest and fastest growing religion. Muslim gay filmmaker Parvez Sharma travels the many worlds of this dynamic faith discovering the stories of its most unlikely storytellers: lesbian and gay Muslims. Filmed over 5 1/2 years, in 12 countries and 9 languages, "A Jihad for Love" comes from the heart of Islam. Looking beyond a hostile and war-torn present, this film seeks to reclaim the Islamic concept of a greater Jihad, which can mean 'an inner struggle' or 'to strive in the path of God'. In doing so the film and its remarkable subjects move beyond the narrow concept of 'Jihad' as holy war.

A Jihad for Love's characters each have vastly different personal takes on Islam, some observing a rigorously orthodox regimen, others leading highly secular lifestyles while remaining spiritually devout. As the camera attentively captures their stories, the film's gay and lesbian characters emerge in all their human complexity, giving the viewer an honest rendering of their lives while complicating our assumptions about a monolithic Muslim community. Crucially, this film speaks with a Muslim voice, unlike other documentaries about sexual politics in Islam made by Western directors. In the hope of opening a dialogue that has been mostly non-existent in Islam's recent history, and defining jihad as a "struggle" rather than a "war," the film presents the struggle for love.

Co-sponsored by Evergreen Queer Alliance (EQA), TESC Amnesty International, Gender and Sexuality: History, Culture, and Politics Academic Program

Filmmaker Parvaz Sharma to speak following film

Parvez Sharma is a Muslim gay filmmaker born and raised in India. In 2005, he was a Producer at Democracy Now! He has three masters degreees and teaches communications. As an activist he was instrumental in setting up the first organized LGBT effort in the eastern state of West Bengal, setting benchmarks for many other LGBT organizing efforts around the sub-continent. A Jihad of Love is his directoral debut.

Awards:
MIX BRASIL, Sao Paulo Brasil - Best Documentary
The Image + Nation Film Festival, Montreal, Canada Best Documentary
The Tri-Continental Film Festival, India - Jury Award for Best Documentary
One World International Human Rights Film Festival, Prague, Czech Republic Rudolf Vrba Jury Special Mention
Torino Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, Italy Best Documentary

Friday, Jan. 23

6:30 pm, Lecture Hall 5
SANTA CLAUS IN BAGHDAD

A family-friendly film about Iraq

Raouf Zaki / 2008 / US / 28 minutes

From the bustling streets of Baghdad and the dreams of two Iraqi children -- a little boy who wants nothing more than a toy car and his teenage sister who desperately needs medicine -- come an unlikely Christmas story. Rich in the textural sounds, images, and characters of modern day Iraq, Raouf Zaki's Santa Claus in Baghdad, a film shot in Massachusetts, tells a story that crosses ethnic and religious lines in a resounding message of hope and understanding. Based on the book "Figs and Fate: Stories about Growing up in the Arab World" by Elsa Marston, Santa Claus in Baghdad tells the story of an Iraqi surviving UN/US imposed sanctions in Iraq circa 2000. It's a story about sacrifices, the social or der of society, and the the power of a simple gift. Amal is a sixteen-year old girl who has fallen a year behind in school due to illness. When she learns that her favorite teacher is leaving, she recruits her classmates to decide on a going-away present for him. Meanwhile, her little brother, Bilal, thinks that their uncle, who will be visiting soon from the United States, is actually Santa Claus.

Co-Sponsored by (Re)Imaginging the Middle East Academic Program

Filmmaker Raouf Zaki in attendance

Raouf Zaki is an Egyptian-American filmmaker who now lives in Massachusetts. Previous films include "Just Your Average Arab," a satirical comic look at being Arab American in post-9/11 US.

8:00 pm, Housing Community Center
HEAVY METAL IN BAGHDAD

Acrassicauda in their studio in Baghdad. Metallica speaks all languages.

Heavy Metal in Baghdad is a feature film documentary that follows Iraq's only heavy metal band Acrassicauda from shortly after the invasion of Iraq to the present day. Despite being accused of being Satanists by other Muslims who don't understand what heavy metal music is, they dream of being a famous metal band. After initially facing challenges from Saddam's regime, they thought they would finally have freedom to play after his fall. When the country fell into bloody fighting, that hope was lost. As Iraq comes apart around them, we see the war through the eyes of the band members and get a humanizing and unique look at the conflict.

From 2003-2006, Iraq disintegrated around them while Acrassicauda struggled to stay together and stay alive, always refusing to let their heavy metal dreams die. Their story echoes the unspoken hopes of an entire generation of young Iraqis.

A sample of film festival events. All films are free. Complete program available soon at www.evergreen.edu/sesame.

Roots and Realities of Occupation
Wednesday, Jan 21 to Friday, Jan 30

Tuesday, Jan 27

6:00 pm, Lecture Hall 5
TO SEE IF I'M SMILING

Tamar Yarom / 2007 / Israel / 59 min

Awards:
Int'l Doc FF Amsterdam (IDFA), Silver Wolf Award and Audience Award
Hot Docs, Special Jury Price
Sarasota FF, Special Documentary Jury Prize
Haifa Int'l FF, Best Documentary
Dokufest, Best Feature Documentary
Israeli Documentary Competition, Best Documentary
Montpellier Festival, Documentary Prize

Israel is the only country in the world where 18-year-old girls are drafted for compulsory military service. In this award-winning documentary, the frank testimonials of six female Israeli soldiers stationed in Gaza and the West Bank pack a powerful emotional punch. The young women revisit their tours of duty in the occupied territories with surprising honesty and strip bare stereotypes of gender differences in the military. The former soldiers share shocking moments of negligence, flippancy, immaturity and power-tripping as they describe atrocities they witnessed and participated in.

The culture of war transforms people: personalities change, moral codes are subverted, values are supplanted and masks are constructed to dull the pain of what they did and didn't do in uniform. At a time when women in the military are increasingly on the frontlines, and the actions of soldiers all over the world are being questioned, this powerful film explores the ways that gender, ethics and moral responsibility intersect during war.

The psychological transformation that these young women underwent as a result of military service is both upsetting & rveting.

8:00 pm, Lecture Hall 5
A CALL TO ACTION

Reflections on Port of Olympia Protests - November 2007

Film screening and discussion of the Port of Olympia protest. Hundreds of people took part in sustained direct action to demilitarize the Port of Olympia for ten days in November 2007. In ten days the community was shaken by police brutality and arrests. The revirberation of these protests changed individuals and communities.

View the work-in-progress film "Call to Action," which documents the port actions many in our community participated in. Learn about the multifacited effort to demilitarize the Port of Olympia since 9/11. Get updated on those that are facing crminal charges from the Women's Action for protesting the Iraq War - the Oly 26.

Panel to follow with the members of the Oly 26

Photos courtesy of Berd Whitlock

Wed., Jan. 28

6:00 pm, Lecture Hall 1
MEETING RESISTANCE

Steve Connors & Molly Bingham / 2006/ Iraq / 85 min

What would you do if America was invaded? Meeting Resistance raises the veil of anonymity surrounding the Iraqi insurgency by meeting face to face with individuals who are passionately engaged in the struggle, and documenting for the very first time, the sentiments experienced and actions taken by a nation's citizens when their homeland is occupied. Voices that have previously not been heard, male and female, speak candidly about their motivations, hopes and goals, revealing a kaleidoscope of human perspectives. Featuring reflective, yet fervent conversations with active insurgents, Meeting Resistance is the missing puzzle piece in understanding the Iraq war. Directed by Steve Connors and Molly Bingham, this daring, eye-opening film provides unique insight into the personal narratives of people involved in the resistance exploding myth after myth about the war in Iraq and the Iraqis who participate.

Through its unprecedented access to these clandestine groups, Meeting Resistance focuses the spotlight on the "other side", clarifying why the violence in Iraq continues to this day and providing a deeper understanding of both the toll of occupation and the human condition of resistance.

Co-sponsored by Mind Screen

Awards:
Best Documentary 2008 MVV Festival
Best Documentary Courage in Filmmaking 2007 Women Film Critics Circle Award
Best of the West 2007 Hawaii International Film Festival
Golden Award Winner 2007 Al Jazeera Documentary Film Festival

Friday, Jan 30

7:00pm Lecture Hall 1
SLINGSHOT HIP HOP

Jackie Reem Salloum / 2008 / Palestine/Israel / 84 min.

Slingshot Hip Hop braids together the stories of young Palestinians living in the West Bank, Gaza and inside Israel as they discover Hip Hop and employ it as a tool to surmount divisions imposed by occupation and poverty. From internal checkpoints and Separation Walls to gender norms and generational differences, this is the story of young people crossing the borders that separate them.

Filmmaker Jackie Reem Salloum in attendance

Jackie Reem Salloum is a New York based artist and filmmaker. Drawing on her Palestinian and Syrian roots, her pop-infused work focuses on challenging the stereotypes of Arabs in the media featured in her short films such as "Planet of the Arabs." After receiving her MFA from New York University, Salloum began directing her first feature length documentary "Slingshot Hip Hop." Five years in the making it made its premiere at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival. Salloum's work is also the basis of a youth education program on Palestine/Israel.

Co-sponsored by Evergreen Hip Hop Congress

with hip hop artist Mohammed Al Farra (aka DR) from Gaza's "PR" Palestinian Rapperz

Mohammed Al Farra has released a solo album and performs with PR. Palestinian Rapperz (aka Palestinian Resistance) began in 2003. They are the first hip hop group coming out of the Gaza Strip and are featured in the film Slingshot Hip Hop.

Mohammed Al Farra of "PR"

About SESAME's Annual Middle East Film Festival....*For six years Students Educating Students About the Middle East, at The Evergreen State College, have sponsored the only Middle East Film Festival in the South Puget Sound region. This little known festival offers our community a unique opportunity to experience the art of filmmaking originating from the Middle East and surrounding regions. SESAME is committed to promoting under represented populations, especially filmmakers of color. This year's film festival, "Roots and Realities of Occupation," is dedicated to the children of Gaza. May they find justice, freedom, and art. May they live a life that is free of oppression and racism.*

SESAME raises awareness about human rights, immigration, and US foreign policy in the Middle East, surrounding regions and the Diaspora. By challenging stereotypes and misrepresentation of regional conflicts and training organizers, SESAME works as an advocate and ally. SESAME serves as an active educational resource, a tool for solidarity building, and a means for anti-racist organizing on campus and in our community. For more information about the festival, feel free to contact SESAME at 360-867-6724 or email sesame@evergreen.edu.

▸ **RESPECT** continued from page 1

basic skills, like using the restroom, skills that are very elementary for functioning. Given that my son has difficulty speaking, a disability the school was unfamiliar with, this presented a number of complications. Placing him amongst students with a variety of needs and neglecting to pay attention to the specific needs he has proved insufficient. As a result of being placed in a setting that was not responsive to his needs, Colton began to mirror the range of behaviors exhibited in the classroom, ultimately stunting his academic development further. They did not provide an academically based curriculum for these kids, which resulted in a failure to find his areas of interest or to develop his skills as a student. In fact, we've suggested on a number of occasions that it would be helpful to our son if they could acquire some graphic arts computer programs and share them with our son to accentuate his talent in that area. But they neglected to do this.

Let's talk about the conditions and circumstances Colton was subjected to. What were some of the activities and experiences he encountered?

Colton, much like other special needs students, got all insufficient amount of one-on-one specialist attention. This caused a number of struggles because direct attention in speech development could prove very helpful for our son. We had requested an increased level of speech therapy, and each time the school failed to satisfy our requests. In addition we often wondered why Colton never received any homework. His seventh grade teacher responded to such an inquiry by saying that she was unaware that he was capable of doing homework. The school failed to be attentive of the students' specific needs, treating the students in a uniform fashion.

Our son also was the recipient of constant harassment and teasing. Prior to the eighth grade my wife had a meeting with the staff at the new junior high school where they promised they would supervise him continually and put an end to the harassment. The behavior nevertheless continued. We even found that another child had poured hot sauce on Colton. The school found that one of his classmates had targeted Colton from the beginning of the school year, yet we were not informed until several months into the school year about the recurring treatment and it appeared very little disciplinary action was being taken to solve the problem.

Another upsetting thing is that the special education students are required by the school to walk around the school grounds collecting trash. This includes used condoms, cigarette butts, and anything found on the school grounds. I approached the staff members at Puyallup High School and informed them that we did not want my son to participate in such activity. My son however, was involved in this activity, even though it was not included in his Individual Education Plan (IEP). They try to justify this program by saying it is a form of vocational training that prepares the students for future employment. This work includes weeding, washing tables and windows, emptying trash cans, cleaning moss from the sidewalk. The school is blind to the fact that this work is humiliating for the students, as general education students are only required to do this work as a part of disciplinary action. It is wrong to assume that these kids are incapable of doing work aside from collecting trash. What kind of lessons does this teach? Doesn't this reinforce the assumption that special needs people will be responsible for cleaning up after people in the general population.

It is wrong to assume that these kids are incapable of doing work aside from collecting trash.

Colton soon developed outburst problems from his frustrations and neglect. Teachers often responded by locking him in the time-out room. They ignored his cries to go to the nurse or call home when he was feeling upset. All the specialists knew that ignoring a child with a condition like Colton's would simply exacerbate his behavioral difficulties. In addition, it is against the law to punish a child for behavior associated with their disability. They have called security on him and have threatened to call the police on him in the past.

My son has developed an ulcer due to the anxiety he had about attending school. In addition, my son has required serious rehabilitation to remedy the physical and mental problems that have developed as a result of the torment he suffered. I feel some of the impacts will prove irreversible. This is extremely upsetting, especially when you consider the intelligence and promise of my son.

I understand the school failed to disclose serious information about Colton's experiences and has attempted to keep other information from you as well. Would you like to discuss some of these instances?

At an IEP meeting, where parents and educators work together to construct an educational outlook plan for the student, the district is supposed to supply procedural safeguards to ensure that if you don't agree with the program developed for your child it can be changed. We were not given a copy of these safeguards for a number of years. When the issue arose about harassment, the school began to issue the procedural safeguard packet at the meetings, but the content was never explained in detail to us.

Colton once experienced what the school believed was a seizure and neither my wife nor I were informed about the matter. Essentially, there was a failure on behalf of the school to communicate with us about what was happening to our son at school, whether it was harassment, his curriculum, his behavior, or how he was treated.

I understand you've taken actions to challenge the situation. Do you want to talk about this for a moment?

We have just completed a due process hearing, where we reprtesented ourselves against the largest law firm in the state of Washington. We had fifteen days of hearings. The judge ruled in favor of the school district, in spite of the significant amount of evidence and witness testimony we produced. We have appealed the finding and have since hired a lawyer who specializes in these matters.

It appears the Puyallup School District has gone to extraordinary lengths to resist your efforts. What do you think this illustrates?

The district has seemingly unlimited resources to fight concerned parents and they bank on the fact that parents will give up and throw in the towel. But, someone has to put up a fight. For this fact numerous parents and students have vocalized their support for our efforts, saying they are unsure if they could endure a similar struggle, often fearing some sort of retaliation.

The school really took advantage of the ignorance of my wife and I on what the law is and what the rights of special education students are. We placed a lot of confidence in the schools that they would provide in the best interest of our son. If parents don't know the law or their rights, we've learned the school will take advantage of this fact.

You mentioned you have been doing pickets or protests in front of the schools. What have these looked like and what kind of responses have you been receiving?

They've been wonderful. I would go down there during the morning traffic hours, take a break, and come back in time to catch the afternoon traffic. I have received tremendous positive feedback. Parents told me they had to remove their child from the school district after experiencing similar difficulties and students shared personal stories.

I'm hoping this district will begin to take notice that children with special needs are deserving of support and have rights. So they are not the star football players or the star tennis player getting all the notoriety in the newspaper. The schools need to treat everybody fairly. Ultimately we're trying to prevent that from happening to another child.

Do you have any advice or knowledge for people interested in aiding in your struggle and making sure this or similar types of injustices don't continue at their schools or other schools?

It is important to research the law and gain an understanding of what rights students and parents have. There are a number of valuable sources of information available on the web. It is important to act fast. If there is an injustice in your child's curriculum or education, file a complaint, or sign-up for a due process hearing. This is where potential concerns gain the most attention. The hearing is very time consuming and can be costly for the school, so it is possible they may provide the services your child needs in a more timely manner. Don't take for granted that the district is always working with your child's best interest in mind, because they often do not. Also, look for advocacy groups, a number of them exist. They can provide valuable knowledge and assistance. Don't give up. If you feel like your losing ground reach out to other people, you will often find support. Until we all get together on board to do this, nothing is going to change.

Jeff Berryhill is a community organizer and can be reached at j_bhill@hotmail.com

Activist Willie Baptist in Olympia

Willie Baptist speaking at St. John's Episcopal Church (Photo by Kate Savkovich)

by Maggie Nelson-Poole

Poverty rights activist Willie Baptist visited St. John's Episcopal Church on Nov. 1 in order to speak out against poverty and social injustice. Baptist's experience ranges from working with the homeless, to organizing steelworkers, to scholarly work at Union Theological Seminary, to working at Poverty University, a branch of the Poor People's Economic Human rights campaign.

Baptist talked with Camp Quixote members in the morning and later spoke to a packed hall, followed by questions from the audience. Baptist inspired the audience, speaking of his involvement in organizing the homeless, encouraging people to agitate local governments to become more aware of poverty, and to take action regarding the plight of people in poverty.

Mr. Baptist talked about some of his more personal experiences: Finding a man who froze to death in a chair in the street in Chicago (Willie's home), where the weather can reach 50 below; breaking into abandoned homes in winter to provide shelter for homeless families, often when some other family had recently been evicted; and organizing homeless encampments.

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A working class hero is something to be

Unjustly fired by the Postal Service, Clint Burelson continues the struggle for workers' rights

by WIP News Service

Longtime local labor and media activist, Clint Burelson, has for a second time been fired from his position at the Postal Service for executing his duties as an American Postal Workers Union representative. Burelson is the president of the APWU Olympia local and has a long record of fierce advocacy, not only in defense of workers rights at the Postal Service, but also on behalf of all of us as citizens of a democracy who depend on the US Postal Service as a means of sharing information.

Early in 2006, Burelson began a campaign to publicize and resist a USPS plan to consolidate operations nationwide in a manner which would transfer good union Postal Service jobs to private corporations paying minimum wage, and essentially subsidize services to large corporate mailers like AOL/Time Warner, while reducing service and increasing costs for the rest of us.

Burelson did the research, wrote the press releases, and organized the pickets, which eventually fueled a nationwide resistance to consolidation plans. The USPS rationale for consolidation was cost savings, but Burelson and others argued at the outset and now present evidence demonstrating that the plan has in fact increased operation costs.

Despite the efforts of Burelson, his coworkers, and local citizens to prevent consolidation here in Olympia, processing of outgoing mail was transferred to Tacoma in Sept. 2006. Olympia no longer has its own postmark.

But the movement Burelson spearheaded in 2006 eventually forced the USPS to put consolidations on hold nationally. Of the 147 facilities initially targeted for consolidation, only four have been implemented. And the struggle continues locally as postal workers fight to bring Burelson back to work and to bring mail processing operations back on line here in Olympia.

How long have you worked for the US Postal Service and when did you first take on a role as a representative in the American Postal Workers Union?

I started with the Post Office in October of 1985. Fred Porter, one of the most dedicated union activists at the time, asked me to come to a union meeting. I didn't even know what to expect, or who was going to be there. It turned out that everyone there was a coworker. Fred asked me if I wanted to get my feet wet, to help out. I'd had plenty of jobs before my postal service job that were processing jobs, kind of like factory work—I processed pineapple, fish, and paper (print shop). Now I was processing the mail, but this was by far the best paying job I'd had. So I felt an obligation to contribute.

So you felt that the Postal Service job was a good job because of the work of the union?

Yes. And I felt I should do my part, that I should give back. So I became a shop steward in 1986.

What was the reason given by the Postal Service managers for firing you this November?

Failure to follow instructions. They said I wasn't leaving a room right away when told to do so. I was trying to discuss labor management issues with the managers and they abruptly told me to leave and later said I didn't leave the room fast enough. They also charged that I was talking to employees on the work floor.

Do you believe that there is more behind the charges than what has been stated on the record?

Yes. It is my job to represent workers and enforce the contract. Management does not want me to do that. I am routinely harassed and discriminated against for doing my job as a union representative. There are many grievance settlements in which management has agreed to stop discriminating against me, but they continue because the labors laws are weak. If I get my job back, which is likely, the remedy is simply back pay. There is usually no additional penalty.

The Postal Service is currently paying me for doing union work eight hours a day. At this point, the Postal Service can pay me to be an effective union advocate or they could pay me to stay at home. Obviously, they'd rather just pay me to stay at home. Since the penalty is weak for firing me, it is more beneficial for them to take a shot at me, and hope that they'll win. From their perspective, if I'm gone, I'm not going to be in their hair as much.

> Since the penalty is weak for firing me, it is more beneficial for them to take a shot at me, and hope that they'll win.

I am trying to do things though to make my firing less tempting. Just this week, the Post Office had to post a notice on the bulletin boards stating they would not delay or deny information requested by the union as result of an unfair labor practice charge I filed with the National Labor Relations Board. Management routinely delays or denies information to make it difficult for the union to handle grievances, so management's admission of guilt and promise to comply may help things.

This isn't the first time the Postal Service has fired you for carrying out your duties as a union representative. Briefly describe the events which led to your firing back in 1994, and what happened when you challenged it in court.

I was fired for more than 3 years. The situation was similar. It all has to do with representing workers. They don't want me to represent workers in an effective manner. In 1994, it was about fighting to get time on the clock to handle grievances, which was contractually guaranteed. Prior to me, stewards in Olympia worked off the clock handling grievances, which limited both the quality and number of grievances. I made it a priority to get steward time on the clock and got fired for it. However, the struggle was worthwhile because I eventually won 8 hours of steward time a day and other significant improvements for the union.

Are you appealing this recent decision? If so, do you plan to represent yourself in court as you did back in 1994?

Yes. It is being appealed in a grievance procedure. Hopefully an arbitration will be scheduled by next year. Since there is no incentive for management to bring me back quickly, past president Louie Mackey and others have organized a picket to create some motivation for management to right their wrong. The picket is also about bringing the outgoing mail operations back to Olympia.

In 2006, you wrote: "The story of how large corporations are benefiting and the average citizen losing in the Postal Service consolidation plans is not being adequately covered by the corporate media, because many of the large mailers who will benefit from the consolidation plans are also the large media corporations that provide most of the news to the country. AOL/Time Warner, which owns CNN and many other media sources of information, is the most obvious example. Newsweek, Reader's Digest, and other large media mailers also support consolidation and cannot be expected to tell the story from the general public's viewpoint." Does that remain true today? Is the story getting out?

Corporate media still represent the interests of corporations, but the pickets at post offices, calls to Congress, and use of alternative media made an impact. In 2006, the Postal Service identified approximately 147 facilities for consolidation. Consolidation is the closing of facilities and/or transfer of mail operations (usually outgoing mail operations) to other facilities. The Postal Service wanted to implement consolidation on a large scale at the urging of large corporate mailers who wanted to take advantage of fewer drop off points and some of whom wanted to take over the sorting of the mail at consolidated locations. In general, mail service suffers more the further the mail is sorted from the community. Large mailers like Time Warner bypass outgoing operations and are generally not concerned with mail service the same way community members are.

As a result of our efforts in Olympia and of other unions and communities targeted early on, the rest of the union and the nation learned about consolidation, and through learning from each other we made enough of an impact that the Postal Service were forced to put the consolidations on hold. Of the 147 facilities targeted only 4 were implemented. Of those 4, one, in Marysville, California, has already been reversed.

How has Postal Service consolidation affected Olympia, and how have you fought back?

The Olympia facility was one of the first facilities targeted and one of the first to fight back. Our contribution was in: 1) demonstrating that consolidation was something the union could and should fight against, 2) providing the research on consolidation so that communities had the information to fight back with, 3) sharing our research, press releases, and stories through emails and non-profit web sites, and 4) making the fight a public one so that the fight was no longer behind closed doors. A couple of web sites run by postal workers from their homes posted all of the information and unions and communities in every part of the country learned from and improved upon our beginning efforts.

> Over the years, the corporate domination of information has meant corporate-friendly decisions

What is the status of the Olympia Consolidation?

In Olympia, the required postal review of the consolidation, which they not surprisingly delayed, revealed a loss of money due to the consolidation. After our picket on the matter, the Postal Service claimed they saved money, but have not provided the union with any information supporting any savings. As it stands, the documentation provided from the Postal Service shows a financial loss for the Postal Service in moving the Olympia outgoing operations to Tacoma.

You have also been very involved in alternative media,—radio, TCTV. Could you talk a little bit about what you were trying to do and what alternative media such as WIP should be emphasizing at this time?

I think all alternative media should be emphasizing the fact that the mainstream media is corporate owned and therefore not reflective of the interests of majority of the people. The core media largely reflects the biases and the views of corporate business. That needs to be put out there first and foremost, so people understand where they're getting their information and why it is so important to get information from somewhere else. People should encourage, create, and support media that is more community based like WIP.

And there's more to it than that. Historically, the Post Office was designed to provide a means of communicating back and forth at affordable, even subsidized rates, so that the public received the necessary information to make well informed decisions. However, over the years, the corporate domination of information has meant corporate-friendly decisions. The recent articles from WIP contributors about The Olympian coverage of the City Council contained excellent information regarding the influence of the corporate media in local politics. It's very important to support alternative, non-profit media so that the public can make informed decisions that are for the common good.

How can the public support you and the postal union?

There will be a picket on Monday, January 12th, from 11 to 1, in front of the main post office in Olympia at 900 Jefferson St. It is important that people come out for this picket to show their support for the union movement and advocate for bringing the mail back to Olympia. It's an opportunity for community members to stand up and be counted when it matters.

For more background on Postal Service consolidations, see the Works In Progress *website* (www.olywip.org) *for articles authored in 2006 by Clint Burelson.*

Clint Burelson (Photo by Ellie Burelson)

Picket at the downtown Olympia post office. (Photo by Don Cheney)

Gaza: The logic of colonial power

by Nir Rosen

I have spent most of the Bush administration's tenure reporting from Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Somalia and other conflicts. I have been published by most major publications. I have been interviewed by most major networks, and I have even testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The Bush administration began its tenure with Palestinians being massacred and it ends with Israel committing one of its largest massacres yet in a 60-year history of occupying Palestinian land. Bush's final visit to the country he chose to occupy ended with an educated secular Shiite Iraqi throwing his shoes at him, expressing the feelings of the entire Arab world, save its dictators who have imprudently attached themselves to a hated American regime.

Once again, the Israelis bomb the starving and imprisoned population of Gaza. The world watches the plight of 1.5 million Gazans live on TV and online; the western media largely justify the Israeli action. Even some Arab outlets try to equate the Palestinian resistance with the might of the Israeli military machine. And none of this is a surprise. The Israelis just concluded a round-the-world public relations campaign to gather support for their assault, even gaining the collaboration of Arab states like Egypt.

An American journal should not be asking whether attacks on civilians can ever be justified. This is a question for the weak, for the Native Americans in the past, for the Jews in Nazi Germany, for the Palestinians today, to ask themselves.

The international community is directly guilty for this latest massacre. Will it remain immune from the wrath of a desperate people? So far, there have been large demonstrations in Lebanon, Yemen, Jordan, Egypt, Syria and Iraq. The people of the Arab world will not forget. The Palestinians will not forget. "All that you have done to our people is registered in our notebooks," as the poet Mahmoud Darwish said.

I have often been asked by policy analysts, policymakers and those stuck with implementing those policies for my advice on what I think America should do to promote peace or win hearts and minds in the Muslim world. It too often feels futile, because such a revolution in American policy would be required that only a true revolution in the American government could bring about the needed changes.

An American journal once asked me to contribute an essay to a discussion on whether terrorism or attacks against civilians could ever be justified. My answer was that an American journal should not be asking whether attacks on civilians can ever be justified. This is a question for the weak, for the Native Americans in the past, for the Jews in Nazi Germany, for the Palestinians today, to ask themselves.

Terrorism is a normative term and not a descriptive concept. An empty word that means everything and nothing, it is used to describe what the Other does, not what we do. The powerful—whether Israel, America, Russia or China—will always describe their victims' struggle as terrorism, but the destruction of Chechnya, the ethnic cleansing of Palestine, the slow slaughter of the remaining Palestinians, the American occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan—with the tens of thousands of civilians it has killed... these will never earn the title of terrorism, though civilians were the target and terrorizing them was the purpose.

Counterinsurgency, now popular again among circles in the Pentagon, is another way of saying the suppression of national liberation struggles. Terror and intimidation are as essential to it as is winning hearts and minds.

Normative rules are determined by power relations. Those with power determine what is legal and illegal. They besiege the weak in legal prohibitions to prevent the weak from resisting. For the weak to resist is illegal by definition. Concepts like terrorism are invented and used normatively as if a neutral court had produced them, instead of the oppressors. The danger in this excessive use of legality actually undermines legality, diminishing the credibility of international institutions such as the United Nations. It becomes apparent that the powerful, those who make the rules, insist on legality merely to preserve the power relations that serve them or to maintain their occupation and colonialism.

Attacking civilians is the last, most desperate and basic method of resistance when confronting overwhelming odds and imminent eradication. The Palestinians do not attack Israeli civilians with the expectation that they will destroy Israel. The land of Palestine is being stolen day after day; the Palestinian people is being eradicated day after day. As a result, they respond in whatever way they can to apply pressure on Israel. Colonial powers use civilians strategically, settling them to claim land and dispossess the native population, be they Indians in North America or Palestinians in what is now Israel and the Occupied Territories. When the native population sees that there is an irreversible dynamic that is taking away their land and identity with the support of an overwhelming power, then they are forced to resort to whatever methods of resistance they can.

Not long ago, 19-year-old Qassem al-Mughrabi, a Palestinian man from Jerusalem, drove his car into a group of soldiers at an intersection. "The terrorist", as the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* called him, was shot and killed. In two separate incidents last July, Palestinians from Jerusalem also used vehicles to attack Israelis. The attackers were not part of an organisation. Although those Palestinian men were also killed, senior Israeli officials called for their homes to be demolished. In a separate incident, *Ha'aretz* reported that a Palestinian woman blinded an Israeli soldier in one eye when she threw acid in his face. "The terrorist was arrested by security forces," the paper said. An occupied citizen attacks an occupying soldier, and she is the terrorist?

In September, Bush spoke at the United Nations. No cause could justify the deliberate taking of human life, he said. Yet the US has killed thousands of civilians in airstrikes on populated areas. When you drop bombs on populated areas knowing there will be some "collateral" civilian damage, but accepting it as worth it, then it is deliberate. When you impose sanctions—as the US did on Saddam-era Iraq—that kill hundreds of thousands, and then say their deaths were worth it—as secretary of state Albright did—then you are deliberately killing people for a political goal. When you seek to "shock and awe", as president Bush did when he bombed Iraq, you are engaging in terrorism.

Just as the traditional American cowboy film presented white Americans under siege, with Indians as the aggressors—which was the opposite of reality—so, too, have Palestinians become the aggressors and not the victims. Beginning in 1948, 750,000 Palestinians were deliberately cleansed and expelled from their homes, and hundreds of their villages were destroyed, and their land was settled by colonists, who went on to deny their very existence and wage a 60-year war against the remaining natives and the national liberation movements the Palestinians established around the world. Every day, more of Palestine is stolen, more Palestinians are killed. To call oneself an Israeli Zionist is to engage in the dispossession of entire people. It is not that, qua Palestinians, they have the right to use any means necessary; it is because they are weak. The weak have much less power than the strong, and can do much less damage. The Palestinians would not have ever bombed cafés or used homemade missiles if they had tanks and airplanes. It is only in the current context that their actions are justified, and there are obvious limits.

It is impossible to make a universal ethical claim or establish a Kantian principle justifying any act to resist colonialism or domination by overwhelming power. And there are other questions I have trouble answering. Can an Iraqi be justified in attacking the United States? After all, his country was attacked without provocation, and destroyed, with millions of refugees created, hundreds of thousands of dead. And this, after 12 years of bombings and sanctions, which killed many and destroyed the lives of many others.

I could argue that all Americans are benefiting from their country's exploits without having to pay the price, and that, in today's world, the imperial machine is not merely the military but a military-civilian network. And I could also say that Americans elected the Bush administration twice and elected representatives who did nothing to stop the war, and the American people themselves did nothing. From the perspective of an American, or an Israeli, or other powerful aggressors, if you are strong, everything you do is justifiable, and nothing the weak do is legitimate. It's merely a question of what side you choose: the side of the strong or the side of the weak.

An occupied citizen attacks an occupying soldier, and she is the terrorist?

Israel and its allies in the west and in Arab regimes such as Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia have managed to corrupt the PLO leadership, to suborn them with the promise of power at the expense of liberty for their people, creating a first—a liberation movement that collaborated with the occupier. Israeli elections are coming up and, as usual, these elections are accompanied by war to bolster the candidates. You cannot be prime minister of Israel without enough Arab blood on your hands. An Israeli general has threatened to set Gaza back decades, just as they threatened to set Lebanon back decades in 2006—as if strangling Gaza and denying its people fuel, power or food had not set it back decades already.

The democratically elected Hamas government was targeted for destruction from the day it won the elections in 2006. The world told the Palestinians that they cannot have democracy, as if the goal was to radicalize them further, and as if that would not have a consequence. Israel claims it is targeting Hamas's military forces. This is not true. It is targeting Palestinian police forces and killing them, including some such as the chief of police, Tawfiq Jaber, who was actually a former Fatah official who stayed on in his post after Hamas took control of Gaza. What will happen to a society with no security forces? What do the Israelis expect to happen when forces more radical than Hamas gain power?

A Zionist Israel is not a viable long-term project, and Israeli settlements, land expropriation and separation barriers have long since made a two-state solution impossible. There can be only one state in historic Palestine. In coming decades, Israelis will be confronted with two options. Will they peacefully transition towards an equal society, where Palestinians are given the same rights, à la post-apartheid South Africa? Or will they continue to view democracy as a threat? If so, one of the peoples will be forced to leave. Colonialism has only worked when most of the natives have been exterminated. But often, as in occupied Algeria, it is the settlers who flee. Eventually, the Palestinians will not be willing to compromise and seek one state for both people. Does the world want to further radicalize them?

Do not be deceived: the persistence of the Palestine problem is the main motive for every anti-American militant in the Arab world and beyond. But now the Bush administration has added Iraq and Afghanistan as additional grievances. America has lost its influence on the Arab masses, even if it can still apply pressure on Arab regimes. But reformists and elites in the Arab world want nothing to do with America.

A failed American administration departs, the promise of a Palestinian state a lie, as more Palestinians are murdered. A new president comes to power, but the people of the Middle East have too much bitter experience of US administrations to have any hope for change. President-elect Obama, Vice President-elect Biden and incoming secretary of state Hillary Clinton have not demonstrated that their view of the Middle East is at all different from previous administrations. As the world prepares to celebrate a new year, how long before it is once again made to feel the pain of those whose oppression it either ignores or supports?

Nir Rosen is a journalist who has reported unembedded in conflict zones in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. His work has been featured in publicatons such as Harper's, Rolling Stone, Atlantic Monthly, Mother Jones, The New Yorker. *He is the author of* In the Belly of the Green Bird: The Triumph of the Martyrs in Iraq. *Of Iranian-Jewish descent, Rosen also has family in Israel.*

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Honduras moves to the left

by Marco Rosaire Rossi

In late August, inside a capital city in Central America, a giant banner was hung portraying Cuba's revolutionary leader Fidel Castro, Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez, Nicaragua's President Daniel Ortega and Bolivia's President Evo Morales. The banner advocated the signing of ALBA—which in English stands for the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas and means "dawn" in Spanish. ALBA is a trade agreement between Latin American countries that supports the principles of solidarity, non-interference, respect for independence, complementarity, and fair trade, a trade agreement that the United States is strongly opposed to. In the streets, tens of thousands of supporters gathered to support ALBA. They waved their national flag, but also the Venezuelan one, and held banners supporting the Sandinistas and the FMLN. Socialist and anti-imperialist rhetoric was on the lips of both the speakers and the supporters.

This capital wasn't Managua, or Havana—traditional places where one would hear such remarks—it was Tegucigalpa, Honduras. The people were celebrating President Zelaya's signing of the ALBA agreement, making Honduras the sixth member of the fair trade alliance. This past October, Honduras' congress approved the deal, solidifying the membership.

> 20 years ago, the idea that Honduras would sign a trade agreement that the United States was adamantly opposed to would have been unthinkable.

Twenty years ago, the idea that Honduras would sign a trade agreement that the United States was so adamantly opposed to would have been unthinkable. Historically, Honduras has been one of the United States' strongest allies in the region. The country was used as a jumping point for the 1954 CIA coup against President Abrenz in Guatemala.

In the 1980s, the country was used as a contra training ground and military base during the United States' war with Nicaragua. Many of the "disappeared" during that war "disappeared" over the border into Honduras. However, in the rapidly changing political landscape of Latin America, traditional alliances are breaking. At the signing of the ALBA agreement President Zelaya announced that "Honduras did not ask permission from any imperialist country to join ALBA" giving a slight not-so-covert jab towards the United States. He went on "Today, we are taking a step towards becoming a government of the center-left, and if anyone dislikes this, we'll just remove the word 'center' and keep the second one."

Honduras' move from far right to center left has been a long time coming. According to legend, the last words of infamous North American filibuster William Walker (who invaded Central America and attempted to annex it on behalf of the southern slave-holding states) were, "What the United States does not conquer through the gun, it will be able to conquer through the dollar." Walker was executed by a firing squad in Honduras. His legacy still looms there. For most of Honduras' history, Walker's prophecy has been true. As far back as Woodrow Wilson, and perhaps even further, Honduras' economy has been partial to the desires of the United States. The country's fate was essentially determined by how well the US State Department and the United Fruit Company could compromise on a given issue. Today, the United States receives almost 40% of the country's exports (while the rest of Latin America only exports 27% to the U.S.).

Its agricultural industry is designed to produce mostly niche luxury goods such as bananas, coffee, shrimp and melons instead of staples like corn, rice, or beans. It ranks 115 out of 177 on the United Nations human development index, and is the fourth poorest country in the Americas. It's this poverty that has been the chief engine driving change in the country.

Even though Honduras has seen a 6-7% economic growth, (a figure that has recently slowed) its wealth has been restricted to the upper classes. The country still has not fully recovered from the ravages of Hurricane Mitch, which wiped out 70–80% of the nation's transportation infrastructure. And, like all poor nations, it is suffering under the rapidly rising cost of food. Meanwhile, other countries in Latin America that have adopted the fair trade model continue to see not only economic growth, but also an end to poverty. Cuba's welfare programs have made it a leader in human development for Central America—second only to Costa Rica. Since 2004, Venezuela's economic growth has not only bordered on double digits, but the country has also experienced increases in literacy, education, and health. "We are open to association processes among States to achieve development, eliminate inequalities, overcome asymmetries and share knowledge and resources," President Zelaya told the newspaper, Prensa Latina, on the day he signed the ALBA agreement.

These alternative economic models have become attractive to Honduras, which has grown frustrated by the United States for not doing more to help the country out of poverty. Even before joining ALBA, President Zelaya signed the country up for Petrocaribe, a program started by Venezuela that offers cheap oil to 18 countries around the Caribbean basin. Now, under ALBA, Honduras hopes to strike even better deals and catch up to some of its counterparts. Venezuela has already offered to buy $100 million worth of Honduran bonds, whose proceeds will be spent on housing for Honduras' poor. Venezuela has also offered to buy $30 million worth of credit for farming, 100 tractors, and 4 million low-energy light bulbs—which will be installed by Cuban technicians—in order to promote energy conservation.

In exchange, Honduras has offered up the right to look for oil in and around the country to an ALBA run company, whose findings will be shared by the member states collectively.

Economic development is definitely a priority for the Zelaya administration, but the true hope in signing ALBA is greater independence. Zelaya's signing speech in August was full of remarks on the greater sovereignty that the country will gain through the trade deal, commenting how signing ALBA is "an act of freedom, because we are a free and sovereign people" and that "we [Latin American nations] are not born slaves nor to have masters."

Economically, part of this sovereignty means closing the trade deficit and converting to a more self-sufficient economy. Currently, Honduras exports $100 million to ALBA countries, while importing $170 million. Politically speaking though, sovereignty may be more difficult. The influence of the US still looms large in the country, so much so that after the passing of ALBA, Enrique Flores Lanza, an advisor to Zelaya, had to reinforce the notion that Honduras was the first "non-aligned country" –meaning it won't be too outspoken about US intervention in the region.

Either way, the signing of ALBA and the support it has from grassroots movements indicates that the prophecy of William Walker on the conquest of the dollar in Latin America may be coming to an end. Simón Bolivar, the 19th Century revolutionary who led Latin America towards its independence from Spain once remarked that, "The United States seems destined by Providence to plague the American continent with misery in the name of liberty." It is to everyone's benefit that the people of Latin America seem just as destined—and able—to resist that misery.

Marco Rosaire Rossi is a graduate of the University for Peace, in Costa Rica.

Open letter to Washington bankers

December 18, 2008

To: D. Michael Jones, President & CEO, Banner Corporation, Walla Walla

Carol Nelson, President & CEO, Cascade Financial Corporation, Everett

Melanie J. Dressel, President & CEO, Columbia Banking System, Tacoma

Brian L. Vance, President & CEO, Heritage Financial Corporation, Olympia

Roy M. Whitehead, President & CEO, Washington Federal, Inc., Seattle

Harold B. Gilkey, President & CEO, Sterling Financial Corporation, Spokane

From: Dan Leahy
1415 6th Avenue SW
Olympia, Washington 98502

Re: Public accountability: Preventing home foreclosures

The US Treasury is authorized to distribute $700 billion dollars in accordance with the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008. Thus far, the Treasury has distributed $165 billion to eighty-seven banks.

Your six banks are the only ones in Washington State to have received part of this $700 billion, as of December 9, 2008. The Treasury has sent your banks $766,868,000, with Sterling Financial Corporation receiving the most at $303,000,000 and Heritage Financial Corporation the least at $24,000,000. (Chart Attached).

Elizabeth Warren, Chairperson of the Congressional Oversight Panel, wrote in her first report that "all Americans have a right to ask: who got the money, what have they done with it, how has it helped the country and how has it helped ordinary people?" (COP, First Report, 12/10/08 p.6).

Thanks to Ms. Warren's report we know you "got the money." Now we want to know what you have done with it and, most especially, how has it helped ordinary people, like, for example, the one in ten mortgage holders now in default and unable to make payments on their homes.

I'm working with people, unions, and neighborhood associations throughout the state to disseminate accurate information about the use of these funds to prevent home foreclosures. An explicit purpose of the Act under which you received millions is to "prevent avoidable foreclosures."

Please respond to my letter no later than Monday, January 26, 2009, indicating your program of loan modifications, principal reductions and moratoria by which you intend to prevent home foreclosures in your regional service areas. Your letter will help dispel the persistent rumors that, contrary to the Act, recipient banks intend to use these tax dollars to expand their operations by purchasing weaker banks rather than helping ordinary people.

I have sent this letter to the daily newspapers servicing your six respective cities and I will also send your response to them.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Cc: Elizabeth Warren, Chairperson, Congressional Oversight Panel

Rob McKenna, Attorney General, State of Washington

Brad Williamson, Division Director, Washington State Division of Banks

Hon. Patty Murray, US Senator

Hon. Maria Cantwell, US Senator

Which state banks got how much

Date received	Washington State Banks: Capital Purchase Program	Treasury gave: $766,868,000	Operational characteristics of the banks
11/21/08	D. Michael Jones President and CEO Banner Corporation 10 S. First Avenue Walla Walla, WA 99362 (509) 527-3636	$124,000,000	$4.6 billion dollar holding company operating two commercial banks in Washington, Oregon and Idaho. Community Financial Corporation, based in Portland, Oregon
11/21/08	Carol Nelson President and CEO Cascade Financial Corp. 2828 Colby Avenue Everett, WA 98201 (425) 339-5500	$ 38,970,000	Cascade Bank. 21 offices in Snohomish, King and Skagit counties.
11/21/08	Melanie J. Dressel Columbia Banking System 1301 A. Street, Suite 800 Tacoma, WA 98402	$ 76,898,000	Fifty-five branches in Washington and Oregon, 45 of which are in Washington.
11/21/08	Brian L. Vance President and CEO Heritage Financial Corp. 201 5th Avenue SW Olympia, WA 98501 (360) 943-1500	$ 24,000,000	Holding Company for Heritage Bank and Central Valley Bank with a total of 20 branches, 14 in Puget Sound Area. Central Valley Bank is in Kittitas and Yakima counties.
11/14/08	Roy M. Whitehead President and CEO Washington Federal, Inc. 425 Pike Street Seattle, WA 98101 (800) 324-9375	$200,000,000	First Mutual has 13 branches in Western Washington. First Federal has 13 branches in New Mexico – mortgage and construction financing.
12/05/08	Harold B. Gilkey President and CEO Sterling Financial Corp. 111 North Wall Street Spokane, WA 99201 (509) 354-8186	$303,000,000	Largest commercial bank hq'd in Washington by assets ($12.7 billion). 175 Depository branches in Wa., Or., Idaho, Montana, and Northern California. Sterling Savings Bank & Golf Savings.

Chris Stegman

(360) 705-3528

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One man's bid to aid the environment

by Amy Goodman

Tim DeChristopher is an economics student at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. He had just finished his last final exam before winter break. One of the exam questions was: If the oil and gas companies are the only ones that bid on public lands, are the true costs of oil and gas exploitation reflected in the prices paid?

DeChristopher was inspired. He finished the exam, threw on his red parka and went off to the Bureau of Land Management land auction that the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance called "the Bush administration's last great gift to the oil and gas industry." Instead of joining the protest outside, he registered as a bidder, then bought 22,000 acres of public land. That is, he successfully bid on the public properties, located near the Arches and Canyonlands National Parks and Dinosaur National Monument, and other pristine areas. The price tag: more than $1.7 million.

He told me: "Once I started buying up every parcel, they understood pretty clearly what was going on ... they stopped the auction, and some federal agents came in and took me out. I guess there was a lot of chaos, and they didn't really know how to proceed at that point."

Patrick Shea, a former BLM director, represents DeChristopher. Shea told the *Deseret News*: "What Tim did was in the best tradition of civil disobedience; he did this without causing any physical or material harm. His purpose was to draw attention to the illegitimacy and immorality of the process."

There is a long tradition of disrupting land development in Utah. In *Desert Solitaire*, Edward Abbey, the writer and activist, wrote: "Wilderness. The word itself is music. ... We scarcely know what we mean by the term, though the sound of it draws all whose nerves and emotions have not yet been irreparably stunned, deadened, numbed by the caterwauling of commerce, the sweating scramble for profit and domination."

Abbey's novel *The Monkey Wrench Gang* inspired a generation of environmental activists to take "direct action," disrupting "development." As The Salt Lake Tribune reported on DeChristopher: "He didn't pour sugar into a bulldozer's gas tank. He didn't spike a tree or set a billboard on fire. But wielding only a bidder's paddle, a University of Utah student just as surely monkey-wrenched a federal oil- and gas-lease sale Friday, ensuring that thousands of acres near two southern Utah national parks won't be opened to drilling anytime soon."

Likewise, the late Utah Phillips, folk musician, activist and longtime Utah resident, often invoked the Industrial Workers of the World adage: "Direct action gets the goods."

More than just scenic beauty will be harmed by these BLM sales. Drilling impacts air and water quality. According to *High Country News*, "The BLM had not analyzed impacts on ozone levels from some 2,300 wells drilled in the area since 2004 ... nor had it predicted air impacts from the estimated 6,300 new wells approved in the plan." ProPublica reports that the Colorado River "powers homes for 3 million people, nourishes 15 percent of the nation's crops and provides drinking water to one in 12 Americans. Now a rush to develop domestic oil, gas and uranium deposits along the river and its tributaries threatens its future."

After questioning by federal authorities, DeChristopher was released.

The U.S. attorney is currently weighing charges. DeChristopher reflects: "This has really been emotional and hopeful for me to see the kind of support over the last couple of days ... for all the problems that people can talk about in this country and for all the apathy and the eight years of oppression and the decades of eroding civil liberties, America is still very much the kind of place that when you stand up for what is right, you never stand alone."

His disruption of the auction has temporarily blocked the Bush-enabled land grab by the oil and gas industries. If DeChristopher can come up with $45,000 by Dec. 29, he can make the first payment on the land, possibly avoiding any claim of fraud. If the BLM opts to re-auction the land, it can't happen until after the Obama administration takes over.

The sales, if they happen, will likely be different, thanks to the direct action of an activist, raising his voice, and his bidding paddle, in opposition.

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Counterprotesters at last year's March for Life Rally. (Photo by Kanako Wynkoop)

Pro-choice supporters seize the day for Capitol Rally

Press release

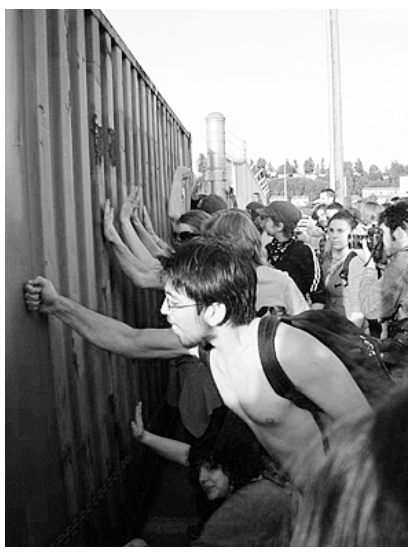
At noon on Thursday, Jan. 22, a celebration in honor of 36 years of reproductive freedom will be held on the steps of the State Capitol in Olympia. In previous years, the "March for Life" anti-choice rally has been held on these same Capitol steps, as well as nationally around the country, on the anniversary of Roe v. Wade. Last year, after organizing yet another counter-protest, Olympia activist Shizuno Wynkoop decided she'd had enough. "A friend of mine said, 'Why are we letting people who oppose women's freedoms and women's rights take our day?'" In an act of reclamation, Wynkoop and her friend made the move to reserve the steps so Roe v. Wade, and the constitutional protection it declares for reproductive freedom, might be honored and celebrated. A major goal in creating this celebration will be "to put the focus back on the individuals who are affected most directly by freedom of choice—women," said Wynkoop.

> A major goal in creating this celebration will be "to put the focus back on the individuals who are affected most directly by freedom of choice – women."

While "Freedom of Choice" has become inherently political, the usual platform of politicians and national pro-choice organizations will not be the main feature of this event. Instead, Wynkoop sees the rally as an opportunity for women, "those the issue is truly about," to speak about women's experiences. She explains that pregnancy and childbirth are not light decisions to be made by anyone but the woman affected, who must be respected and trusted to make the appropriate choice for herself, her family, and the times. She quoted an observation from Dr. Susan Wicklund's book, *This Common Secret*, that "Women have abortions because they want to be good mothers."

At the rally, abortion clinicians, early freedom fighters and women who've had positive abortion experiences will offer their perspectives on women's health and women's rights. The organizers also see a direct connection between the oppression of midwives and doulas and the destruction of women's freedoms. "We want to represent, celebrate and reclaim the wisdom of these bearers of women's sacred knowledge," said Wynkoop.

All who support women's rights and freedom of choice are invited to attend. In the Olympia area, contact roevwadecelebration@gmail.com or Shizuno Wynkoop (wynshi18@evergreen.edu) to volunteer. In Seattle, contact Radical Women (RWseattle@mindspring.com) to volunteer or carpool.



In memory of Mat Slobodkin

We at *Works in Progress* would like to send our condolences to the friends and family of Mat Slobodkin, who passed away in December at the age of 23. Mat was a dedicated activist in Olympia and Chicago, working with the Committee in Solidarity for the People of El Salvador (CISPES) and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Many locally will remember him as one of the defendants of the Olympia 22 port protest case in 2006–7. Mat also had a passion for journalism, photography, and was a talented fiddle player. He will be missed by many for a long time.